



SPECIAL EDITION

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Personal Blog at:
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City of Tucson Ward 5 Newsletter

Volume 2, Issue 1

April 2011

A LETTER FROM VICE MAYOR FIMBRES

The Vote by Mail Process

As society continues to advance and change, one thing remains constant, casting a vote. Over time, changes have been proposed and made to allow people the opportunity and convenience, to cast their vote in elections, with the potential of saving money.

When I was elected to the Tucson City Council in 2009, the voters charged me with reviewing the practices, procedures and potential cost saving measures for the City of Tucson during these tough, economic times. One area in which to save money is to consider changing how elections are conducted.

During the March 22 Mayor and Council meeting, I brought forth the consideration of having the City of Tucson conduct their elections through a vote by mail process. By a vote of 6 to 0, they approved holding a public hearing for further consideration and action.

The vote by mail election process has been successful in addressing these concerns of saving money, convenient voting and ballot security in other cities.

In 1993, the State of Washington began allowing voters to vote by mail for all elections. All vote by mail elections first came into existence in 1998 in the State of Oregon

In Arizona, Prescott Valley, Surprise, Pinetop-Lakeside, Clarkdale, Peoria, Payson, Paradise Valley, Litchfield Park and Globe conduct their elections using a vote by mail process. Locally, the Towns of Oro Valley and Sahuarita all conduct their elections with a vote by mail process, since 2002 and 2003 respectively. The Catalina Foothills School District and the Sunnyside School District are considering changing their elections to a vote-by-mail process.

The Arizona legislature passed a law in 2009 allowing a voter to place their name on a "Permanent Early Voting List" (PEVL), which is maintained by the County Recorder. Those on this list are automatically mailed a ballot in every election.

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Since this change in the law, Tucson voters have spoken on this by signing up for the PEVL and voting early by mail.

For the past two city elections, the voters of Tucson cast their ballots on average of 85% early-vote by mail for the two primary elections and 63% early-vote by mail for the two general elections.

In 2009 when the PEVL List was created, 69,000 registered Tucson voters signed up to receive their ballot early for all elections. In two years, that number has increased to more than 106,000 of the 220,000 current, registered voters. This is an increase of more than 50% from its inception resulting in close to 50% of Tucson voters already getting their ballot early.

Questions have been brought up about the proposed process and the potential for voter fraud. (A Class Five Felony under Arizona Revised Statutes 16-1005 and 16-1006).

According to the Tucson City Clerk, Roger Randolph, there have been no reported cases of fraud for vote by mail to his office. Vicky Miel, the Town Clerk of Sahuarita and Julie Bower, the Town Clerk of Oro Valley also stated they have had no reported cases of fraud for vote by mail as well.

Signature verification would be conducted by the Pima County Recorder's office. Tabulation of the ballots would be conducted by the Tucson City Clerk's office. Representatives from the political parties will be present to review and oversee this entire process.

This proposal will allow people to still cast their ballot at a voting location if they so choose. Tucson's City Clerk and the Pima County Recorder have both initiated policies and procedures to protect and insure the security and confidentiality of one's ballot.

A consultant concluded that the City Clerk's Office was capable and prepared to conduct an all mail ballot election should the Mayor and Council provide direction. On April 5, there will be a public hearing before the Mayor and Council, who will consider this proposal and cast their vote, for which we need to hear from Tucson voters on this issue.

Peace

Richard G. Fimbres
Vice Mayor